

South End Community Meeting
March 19, 2009 – 6:00PM
Mt. Carmel Academy

Ms. Joan Kagan of Square One addressed the audience. Square One has its corporate office located in the South End section of Springfield, so they are very involved in what's going on in this neighborhood. She explained the following presentation will be about the improvements to Main Street up to what is being called Columbus Circle. She went on to introduce people present at the meeting including Samalid Hogan, project manager for the City, Ed Whitley, Deputy Director of Neighborhood Services, Matt Chase, Jeff Vassar and John Becchard all engineers of VHB and Bob Kaye of Mass Development. She wanted to also thank Shannon from Representative Coakley-Rivera's office for her presence and Joe for supplying the pizza and the use of Mount Carmel for the meeting. Ms. Kagan went on to introduce Mr. Jesus Arce, the Mayor's Aide.

Mr. Arce welcomed all the residents and business owners. He stated Mayor Sarno sends his greetings to all and he is pleased that the South End is getting the long-awaited attention it deserves. He expressed that the Mayor was very excited to get started on the improvements and he wanted everyone to stay positive through the process. He stated that although we are in dark economic times, the money and effort for the South End revitalization have been committed and that is something positive to keep in mind. He wished all a lovely evening.

Ms. Hogan translated Mr. Arce's speech into Spanish.

Ms. Kagan stated Mayor Sarno has been a wonderful support throughout this process, a champion of the South End, and they appreciate that. She stated Mayor Sarno has dedicated resources such as his office, the City's Office of Planning and Economic Development, and financial resources to this revitalization project. She stated Samalid Hogan of the Office of Planning & Economic Development would address the audience. She explained that Ms. Hogan will be recapping the last two (2) years they have been working on the revitalization.

Ms. Hogan stated she will go over what has been done in the past two (2) years. She stated they have been planning changes for the South End for a long time and they finally have the support of local administration and monetary support to get things done. She stated she would recap the public meetings they have had and how the plan has evolved.

Ms. Hogan began by stating in October of 2007 the ULI reports on the South End gave specific recommendations on what needs to be done in this area of the City. She read some of the report and some of the recommendations they listed. The first one stating a more inclusive community development coalition of stakeholders dedicated to establishing economic development, planning and funding priorities for the Hollywood-Gemini area should be created. They must come together to be the change agent for the community. She explained the second recommendation was embarking on a community master planning effort to assess the environment and recommend changes to promote

safety, business and residential diversity. The third recommendation is a wide range of funding alternatives should be looked into so that they may be used to support the agreed upon priorities for development, housing diversity and business and retail development in the neighborhood. She explained so far all of these things have been touched on. She showed the different funding sources from both the state and the city they are receiving and she stated that the community has been involved. They are also looking at different ways to address the public safety issues to retain the businesses in the City.

Ms. Hogan stated they began working on a plan in 2008 that would address the things the ULI recommended but with some adjustments in their own words. The goals of the South End Revitalization Project are to work with the police and neighbors to increase public safety, improve pedestrian and vehicle circulation through the neighborhood, increase the visibility of State Street and Emerson Wright Park, improve curb appeal of the sixteen (16) apartment buildings, increase income diversity by providing new housing and ownership opportunities and enhance Main Street to retain and attract business. She stated they are currently working on addressing each of these things in stages. She showed some of the pages from the ULI report from 2007 with the physical changes they recommended. She stated some are far-fetched but they are intended to make one think. Ms. Hogan explained they must look at the cost for these things and then tailor the plans accordingly. A company was hired to hash out the plans for the South End and she showed the things they came up with. She explained the plans were outstanding on paper but they weren't sure that those plans were feasible.

Ms. Hogan went on to explain in 2008 community meetings were being held to see what the community felt about the ideas and they began to make changes. She explained some of the changes made including eliminating some things suggested and opening up Emerson Wright Park. She stated in October 2008, after several community meetings, Studio One was hired to help take the plans to the next step. She explained the plan being viewed is the latest plan but it will not be the final plan. The input of the neighborhood and business owners is very valuable and necessary. She wanted to encourage all to continue to attend the South End Community meetings.

Ms. Kagan stated that it is important to express there has been progress at the meetings they've held. The recommendations, ideas and suggestions have not all been incorporated but they are working on including as many of them as they can. They have discussed many of them with the engineers, the police department, city planners, architects, and other professionals to incorporate as many as possible. She explained that even though they have not all been included in the plans, they have all been considered and the ones that were able to be implemented were implemented. She introduced John Becchard from VHB, Inc., the engineering firm. Ms. Kagan explained that a presentation was being given on Main Street at the current meeting so that was the focus. She reminded everyone that the plan is to tackle the South End improvements in stages and Main Street is the focus at the moment. She stated she would like everyone to stay goal oriented and solution minded. She went on to explain she would like everyone to stay focused on moving forward and not get stuck on what things did and didn't work in the last twenty (20) years for the South End. She explained this is a prime opportunity for the City and

even though we are in hard economic times the money for this project is still available. She stated they do not want to miss such a large opportunity. Ms. Kagan introduced Mr. John Becchard of VHB, Inc.

Mr. Becchard stated they recently had a meeting to discuss the renovations being done to South Main Street. He explained they would give an update and discuss the concerns and things that were brought up at that previous meeting. He thanked all the residents and business owners that attended that last meeting. He expressed that he wanted the community meeting to remain an open dialogue so that they can have success with the project. He stated they need input from the abutters, people of the neighborhood, and business owners. He stated they will talk about traffic, the existing conditions and things that need to be addressed. He explained that they have looked over the comments made at the February 10, 2009 meeting and they have refined the design plan and moved to laying out the design. Mr. Becchard explained the design layout includes traffic signals, landscaping, street lightings, and prospective rendering of what the area will look like.

Mr. Becchard stated they will discuss the limits of the project on Main Street which range from Howard Street to Locust Street, which is also being called Columbus Circle. He stated he has heard this intersection called many different things locally but he wanted to be clear that they are referring to the intersection with the Columbus statue. He explained the intersections chosen on Main Street, which are Union Street, Fremont and Central, the pedestrian signal at Montpelier and Gardiner and Broad and Wendell Place. He stated there has been discussion of taking Main and Locust Street and extending them to Mill Street because that is really the whole South End neighborhood. He explained this is being explored. He has done one (1) site visit to assess the corridor but it will be a slight money issue with incorporating that into the project. However, they are still exploring options to include this section into the revitalization. Repairing the sidewalks, landscaping, new lighting and resurfacing the street are things that were discussed for this section. Mr. Becchard stated one issue with extending the project up to the Mill Street intersection is having the traffic signals at Mill Street and Locust Street and the traffic signal at Main Street and Mill Street upgraded to meet ADA standards which will increase spending.

Mr. Becchard stated based on input and discussion from the meeting on February 10th they are looking to eliminate the traffic signal with the pedestrian crosswalk at Montpelier and Gardiner Streets. He explained they will narrow the roadway, increase landscaping and reduce pedestrian crossing time. That particular traffic signal is antiquated and it isn't being used. This will save some money also.

Mr. Becchard explained the scope is about the same, but they have slightly altered the limits. He explained they have increased the budget from about \$3.2 million to about \$3.8 million due to the increase in construction costs and things of that nature. He stated there is some contingency included in this budget for unforeseen issues that may arise.

Mr. Becchard showed and explained examples of what they are planning to do with the roadways and sidewalks. The improvements done on East and West Columbus Avenues

are being used as models for the South End project. He stated the renovations done to the other end of Main Street are something they are also considering incorporating into the South End as far as the brick walkways and things like that. He stated they would like some input so that they can create a sense of place in the South End, whether it be the exact same as the upgraded downtown or something a little different. He stated Mass Highways is working on improvements on North Main Street from Carew Street to the Chicopee line. Mr. Becchard explained they would like to make the South End more unique and not exactly like the downtown improvements.

Mr. Becchard showed the existing conditions and explained the improvements they intend to make. He stated they will upgrade the traffic signal at Union Street and make it more handicap accessible. They wish to narrow the roadway, improve on pedestrian crossing, and enhance the sidewalk either with brick patterns or actual bricks. He explained that they have laid out the landscaping and traffic signal equipment with additional calculations and analysis they decided they can make it work. He stated the existing trees don't have full foliage due to the weather but they plan to place new trees on the belt. Mr. Becchard also stated they wish to enhance the streets with sidewalk treatments to meet DPW and Parks Department standards. He stated the metal ones that were used in the past do not get properly maintained. He continued on to explain the pictures of the layout they created. He explained they plan to do the same things he had displayed, including enhancing the visual appearance, to the next corner.

Mr. Becchard began to explain the proposed changes for the intersection at Central and Fremont Streets. He stated they will do similar things to this intersection. He stated they will enhance landscaping and increase pedestrian safety with push buttons to stop the traffic. He showed a visual of the proposed landscaping and described the difference in the colored areas.

Mr. Becchard began to describe the changes for the intersection at Montpelier and Gardiner. He stated they plan to improve the sidewalks and make the visual appearance more stimulating. They plan to protect some of the trees that are currently at this intersection. He began to describe the visual board he had with the plans for this intersection. There is some good vegetation currently there and they went over which were good and which needed to be removed due to disease or damage from vehicles with the City Forester. He stated they want to retain forty (40) trees in the corridor that are healthy and they want to place another thirty (30) trees throughout the corridor.

Ms. Hogan stated that some of the trees that must be removed have broken the sidewalk.

Mr. Becchard stated this was true. He explained they will either replace the sidewalk or repair the tree pits around the sidewalks. He stated they do not want to remove any healthy trees but they are concerned with pedestrian safety.

Ms. Hogan stated they will be making sure the trees that are being placed into the corridor are trees that were selected because the roots will not grow so large that they break up the sidewalk.

Mr. Becchard stated there are two (2) things with that. He stated they have picked trees that are indigenous to New England and its change in weather patterns. His landscape architect is Jef Vasser and he has walked the tree belts with the City Forester and Parks Department. They decided which trees need to be removed and which species would work along the corridor. This is the first step. He explained the second piece of this is discovering the tree pit so that the trees have room to grow and the roots grow downward instead of outward.

Mr. Becchard stated they did a layout of what the plans would look like when they were executed. He stated the new lights, new landscaping and pedestrians on the street are all apart of the visual he was displaying. He explained they also did a schematic of what they are trying to do. They wish to maintain two (2) lanes, parking where appropriate, and improving on pedestrian traffic in the South End.

Mr. Becchard continued on to describe the changes proposed for the Broad Street and Wendell Place intersection. He stated Broad Street and Wendell Place were reconstructed several years ago as part of another project. They want to upgrade some equipment although the wheelchair ramps already meet current standards. He explained they are looking at changing the crosswalks to match the signature crosswalks that will be used through the corridor. They are being shown as brick or in brick color. Mr. Becchard stated the other thing discussed was the existing curb line. He stated it is currently about six to eight feet (6-8 ft) off the face of the building to the curb line. They want to bring the curb line out about six feet (6 ft), making this the planting strip, and narrow the roadway.

A community member asked Mr. Becchard what the stores are supposed to do when they have deliveries.

Mr. Becchard replied that areas have been laid out for parking and loading zones. He stated they have to work with the City, as far as what their regulations are, so that these areas are legal and within City regulations. He stated they want to see how they can narrow the roadway and not affect any businesses at the same time.

Mr. Becchard continued to explain the plans for the roadway, landscaping and the curb line. He stated that bringing the curb line out about six to eight feet (6-8 ft.) would allow better planting and additional landscaping. Mr. Becchard stated as they move toward Elmwood and York Streets, they would like to continue narrowing the roadway. He stated this would give more room for a green area, which is landscaping. He explained narrowing the roadway would make it a little bit safer along with adding more street lights.

A community member asked how they will plow in the winter with narrower roadways.

Mr. Becchard stated there will still be about a twenty foot (20 ft.) area for lanes and a shoulder.

A community member stated it is difficult to turn the corner as the streets are now.

Mr. Becchard stated that is something they can look more closely at and take it into account. He stated the snow is not getting plowed to the curb line now because the roadway is too wide. He explained that if the curb line is brought out a little they will still have to plow it to the line they are currently plowing it to now.

Ms. Hogan asked if any of the business owners in this area were present.

One of the business owners stated parking is an issue. He stated the plans look very good and the lights proposed for Main and Union Streets look good, also.

Ms. Hogan stated this was at the other end of Main Street.

Mr. Becchard stated they are not attempting to impact any parking. He explained the City's meters on this street will be replaced at the end of reconstruction with state-of-the-art meters.

Ms. Hogan asked if there were any business owners present from the area they are currently discussing, from the Broad Street and Wendell Place intersection or towards the Elmwood and York Street intersection.

A business owner stated the plans will look good but he was curious as to how the traffic would flow. He explained he owns a business across from Broad Street.

Ms. Hogan stated his business is to the right of Wendell Place.

The business owner stated trying to make a left turn at this intersection causes a slight traffic jam because the cars behind cannot go around.

Mr. Becchard stated they will look more closely at that. He stated they were planning to narrow the roadway. He stated the issue is illegal parking. Mr. Becchard showed the audience on the plans where the illegal parking was affecting traffic flow. He explained people have to be in the center lane to make a left turn down Broad Street due to this illegal parking. If the traffic flow allows people to make turns from the left lane and through vehicles pass on the right, it will clear traffic much quicker and the business owner's driveway will remain clear. He explained they will need law enforcement to make sure this illegal parking is deterred.

A community member stated that the landscaping planned is nice but with the roadway being narrowed it will be very difficult for emergency vehicles to get through these streets. He stated at State and Main Streets there are a lot of school busses that travel this way and in the winter, with the snow plowed up, there aren't really two (2) lanes to use. He stated he doesn't agree with the idea of making the sidewalks larger.

Mr. Becchard stated they have taken away some of the shoulder that does not allow parking. He explained they have not narrowed lanes. The lanes and the shoulder will still be within regulation. However, this is an issue that they will take note of.

A community member explained that this is a heavily congested street and a fire truck will not get through. He stated that the plans are to widen the area for landscaping when they should be widening the street for traffic. He explained that if there is a narrower street for travel there will be problems. He stated when they plow it's about two to three feet (2-3 ft.) from the curb line, so with the narrower street this will be an issue. He suggested the engineers view the street and assess the situation when the most traffic is going down Main Street.

Mr. Becchard stated they have been out on Main Street and they have done traffic counts. He stated they are not going to make two (2) lanes going southbound. He explained they want to have one (1) lane with a wide enough shoulder that can accommodate public safety. He stated with an emergency vehicle, they have a strobe that will be able to turn the signal green for their vehicles. Mr. Becchard explained they will not be able to make the thruway wide enough for two (2) lane traffic but they do want an appropriate size lane and shoulder for emergency vehicles. A tractor trailer would be a different story but all must yield to emergency vehicles. He stated they didn't hear much opposition to the plan of widening the shoulder when it was discussed at the last community meeting, but that may have been because it wasn't seen on paper.

A community member asked how parking along Main Street on both sides will be handled from Union to Mill Streets.

Mr. Becchard stated they are not eliminating many parking spaces. He stated if any are eliminated it is one (1) or two (2) in a few areas, but nothing drastic. He explained it has not been narrowed all the way down Main Street. The plans show narrowing only at the Gardiner Street and Montpelier Street intersection. He stated the parking being hindered by narrowing this section is illegal parking to begin with.

Ms. Hogan stated it sounds like police enforcement of the illegal parking areas and correct plowing by the DPW are necessary to make sure vehicles can travel the street successfully.

A community member asked if the belief in DPW plowing correctly was warranted.

A community member explained that at the light at Broad Street it is twenty feet (20 ft.) or two (2) cars long and sometimes cars cannot pass and go through.

Mr. Becchard explained this is due to illegal parking. He stated these illegal spaces need to be pulled out of this area.

A community member stated there are always cars there and it makes it difficult to make a right turn.

Mr. Becchard stated he wanted to take this concern into consideration and speak with the gentleman about this concern. He began to explain how older traffic signals operate on time. He explained they plan to place sensors in the pavement so that the signal will change when a car appears to be waiting.

A community member asked if the sensor will know a car is attempting to make a left turn.

Mr. Becchard explained the traffic signal that is currently operating in this location is not up to date, so they plan to update it to accommodate the intersection and traffic flow. He explained it is not written in stone yet, but they are looking at sensors in the pavement or video cameras, whatever will be more sufficient in this location. He stated cars cannot make a left turn without cars building up behind them. They will change the system so that the sensors in the pavement will allow the light to change when it is the most necessary. In example when there is a long line of cars waiting, the sensor will allow the signal to remain green to allow these cars to pass. He explained this is not guaranteed to be implemented but it is an option they are looking into.

A community member stated the signal at the Broad and Wendell Place intersection was placed there as part of another project. He stated that signal is actually causing more havoc at the light at Mill Street then anywhere else. He began to discuss the portion of the intersection where cars park illegally. He stated there are about four (4) or five (5) legal parking spaces in this area but he would like to know why these can't all just be eliminated. He explained he understands the City has enforcement issues and slightly past the southside crosswalk, traffic can be eliminated going northbound on Main Street. He stated if something can be designed so that these issues can be eliminated and the concerns of the business owners can be met it would be ideal. He wants visitors to view Main Street and think that it is well designed.

Mr. Becchard stated going back to the initial design, they do not want to impact businesses or reduce parking but they wish to make the signals more efficient. Part of making the signals more efficient is enhancing this parking but walking through these areas is important too. He stated they want to encourage pedestrian movement a little and perhaps it can be scaled back slightly so that snow is being removed properly and enforcement of the illegal parking is being handled. He stated he wished there was a way to deter this parking but they do need help with this issue. There were excellent points being raised and they will take some of these ideas back and see how they can make adjustments.

A community member pointed out that the diagram showed a majority of the parking is on the left side of the street. He explained it appears most of the parking there is residential. Residential parking is something that shouldn't be allowed on Main Street. He explained this is something that needs to be worked out with the City of Springfield so they have their own parking lot. He asked how they can have business parking lots being used as parking for these residences. He stated this is frustrating.

Ms. Hogan stated she would like to address the concerns brought up about the businesses and the quality of life issue. She explained they would like to work with the businesses and they want them to take ownership of their front porches. People walk the streets and they litter and the City cannot pick up all the trash, so it is nice for the business owners to be mindful of this and take pride in their front porches.

A community member stated this is done everyday by the business owners.

A community member stated she does a lot of walking on Main Street and she explained that behind the Family Dollar Store there is a lot of parking that is not being utilized. She stated this could be used for tenant parking.

Mr. Becchard stated they must check and see who is responsible for this space and if it is already being utilized.

A community member stated there are also buildings that are not being used so these places could be demolished and used for parking.

Mr. Becchard stated this will be looked into. He explained he viewed most of the parking was being done at night and sometimes in the morning. He explained they need to view who is going in and out.

A community member stated the parents putting their children on the bus also need somewhere to park their vehicles.

Ms. Hogan stated there is forty-five (45) minutes allotted for questions and answers at the end of Mr. Becchard's presentation.

Mr. Becchard stated he would like to take one (1) more question.

A community member stated he has observed that since the light at Broad Street went up, the traffic on Main Street has increased considerably due to Main Street being a gateway through the City. He explained people will stop at this light and begin talking to people and the light will continue to change. People will attempt to bypass this by going down Columbus Avenue but this takes focus off of Main Street.

A community member suggested eliminating this light at the Broad Street intersection. He asked if this light was necessary.

Mr. Becchard stated he is not sure about the studies done when the light was placed there but there was a need to stop the traffic at the Broad and Wendell intersection because people were having trouble getting out of there. That was the original intent of that signal. He stated they will look at this again and see if there is something different that can be done here.

A community member asked if the landscape architect was present.

Mr. Becchard stated that he was.

A community member stated a wider sidewalk is great but on a six foot (6 ft.) sidewalk there will be plants and trees that will eliminate some of the sidewalk. He stated he foresees issues with people riding bikes along the sidewalk while people are walking. He stated he also believes there may be a problem with removing snow. He asked if the area for landscaping has to be that much wider.

Mr. Becchard explained that the sidewalks are going to be two feet (2 ft.) wider in the area beyond Broad Street. He explained they are widening the area so that a grass belt may be added. He explained they need to provide a clear width through there but it will only be in a few isolated locations.

A community member pointed out where there is currently a bus stop on the diagram near the Broad Street and Wendell Place intersection.

Mr. Becchard stated there is one on both sides of the street and they are working on not affecting the bus stops. He explained they are not particularly looking at the school bus stops but more so the City bus stops. Mr. Becchard stated the City is working on something on Sumner Avenue where the City busses will be able to clear traffic signals, in a way that is similar to emergency vehicles but not the same, so traffic may be regulated. They will look into this as an option also.

Mr. Becchard stated as they move toward Columbus Circle they intend to expand on the island, improve on the lighting, improve on the sidewalks and narrow down the pavement in this area for safe pedestrian crossing. There is a McDonald's in this area across from the island, as well as some neighborhoods up the street and some bus stops close by.

Mr. Becchard explained what was discussed at the previous community meeting and what the projected schedule is. He explained they did an existing conditions survey, had a couple of community meetings, and they worked on preliminary designs throughout the month. He stated they will let the City of Springfield know what the anticipated next phase is in April and they are looking at the final design being completed in May or June. They are looking at implementation later in the summer or early in the fall of 2009. He stated there are concerns that were raised at the current meeting and they will work with the City on these things and moving forward. He stated with the City's review and approval construction will start late summer or early fall and will go into 2010.

Ms. Hogan asked that Mr. Becchard go over the explanation of Main and Union Street once more. She explained she would like him to discuss the brick face street signs. She asked that he go back to the diagram so that everyone knew what type of sign she was discussing. Ms. Hogan wanted to know if the community liked these types of signs or if they wanted them upgraded.

Mr. Becchard explained that the photos appear dark due to the lighting in the auditorium so the details of these signs may be a little difficult to see.

A community member stated flowers are planted there but they are very small. She stated bigger flowers would be nice.

Ms. Hogan asked if they would like a different look or if they liked the brick look.

Mr. Becchard stated he has heard from some business owners that the brick has been hit by cars and some of them are not in good shape. He went on to explain that some stated they should get rid of them and replace them with more traditional street lighting. They want to put new trash receptacles through here as well but some individuals were in favor of the current brick look and others were not. He stated they are attempting to get a feel of what the community believes would look good.

Ms. Hogan asked if Mr. Becchard could bring examples of alternatives to the brick look to the next community meeting.

Mr. Becchard stated this was possible.

The VHB landscape architect, Jef Vasser, stated there are a number of plants that could be used along Main Street but they spoke with the City Parks Department because they are mostly responsible for the plants and maintenance. He explained they do not want to get rid of the plants but they want something placed here that can be easily maintained.

A community member stated all the new trees and plants will be a waste of money.

Mr. Becchard stated they are not asking the community to pay for them. They are simply asking the business owners to maintain the plants near their area with a small amount of water and things like that. Mr. Becchard asked if there were no more questions, he will turn the meeting back over to Joan Kagan.

Ms. Kagan stated decisions still have to be made about plants and the design of the crosswalk. Four (4) different designs were presented. She asked Mr. Becchard if he would like their input to be given to Ms. Hogan and then passed along to VHB.

Mr. Becchard stated the City is pushing for this project to begin so they would like to get input on this part of the design at the current meeting. He explained some of the planting and things of that nature are going to be decided by the Parks Department. He stated they want to make sure Main Street has identity. The architecture of the buildings in the South End contains a lot of brick, so they were looking for designs to compliment this in the crosswalks and things like that. They believe the brick banding along the sidewalk enhances and brings the architecture of the community and ties things together. He stated enhancing some of the brick banding that is already in place along the curb line is something they are really interested in doing.

A community member stated the brick banding does look very nice but the children of the neighborhood like to dig the bricks up and use them maliciously. She stated they have done this before.

Mr. Becchard stated they would be printed or stamped asphalt. He explained they would not use real brick and it would not be something that could fade away. The pavement will be colored all the way through. He stated the banding around the sidewalk will be real brick but it will be placed down with asphalt base and they are very difficult to separate. Mr. Becchard stated this banding does look more attractive then the stamping.

Ms. Hogan asked if this was done at the other end of Main Street.

Mr. Becchard stated he is not sure about the other end of Main Street but he is sure it is being done along State Street and it is real brick being used. He stated some of the banding downtown is also real bricks.

A VHB engineer stated there are two (2) different technologies being used for the brick appearance. He asked that Mr. Becchard explain what these technologies are so that the community could decide which one they believe is better for their community.

Mr. Becchard began to explain the difference between the technologies for the brick banding of the sidewalks. He explained one (1) diagram. The asphalt is colored throughout, it is heated and they stick the pattern into it. He explained it does have a brick feel. He explained the second way to form these patterns. He stated they have done this downtown. They put impressions into the pavement and they pour a liquid into the pavement. He stated with this style it can get dirty and the depth is only a quarter of an inch thick and the first one tends to last longer.

A community member asked if it would be similar to the brick that is currently on Columbus Avenue.

Mr. Becchard stated real brick is being used on Columbus Avenue. He explained these are ideas for the sidewalk. He stated on the West Columbus side, near the Basketball Hall of Fame, it is a little different and they would have to take a look at that.

A community member stated this would be difficult to maintain.

Ms. Hogan asked if real brick was not used would the imprint be used instead.

Mr. Becchard stated the City has done the imprint with the stamped asphalt on Walnut Street.

A community member asked if this process was cheaper then using real brick.

Mr. Becchard stated that it is cheaper. He explained using real brick is better if it is done correctly though. He stated he wants to look at East Columbus also and see what process was used.

A community member asked what type of plants would be used along south Main Street.

Mr. Vasser stated trees have been recommended but they are looking at trees that do not break up the sidewalk. In areas where narrowing is being done they are planning to use trees that have the roots grow upright. He stated Maple and Oak trees have these types of roots. The Zelkova and hybrid Elm trees have been successful in these types of areas. He explained the forester listed at least ten (10) different trees that would work. He continued on to explain the trees roots growing upright. Mr. Vasser showed the community an example of this with a diagram. The roots of these trees stay tight. In the areas with the wider planting areas, trees with roots that grow more outward can be used.

A community member pointed out that the roots are growing through the sidewalks in a few areas. He asked if the trees whose roots are currently growing through the sidewalks will be replaced with these trees that have roots that grow upright.

Mr. Vasser stated they will look at these specific locations. He stated they cannot increase the sidewalks where this is happening.

A community member stated he recommends they be removed.

Mr. Vasser stated most likely these trees will be removed and trees will not be forced into areas. He stated if the trees will not grow healthy in a certain place they will not force them into that situation.

A community member stated they want trees but the expert from the past did make mistakes. He stated Ed Casey will be much better this time around.

Mr. Vasser stated they have been working with Mr. Casey and they have anticipated these problems already. He stated the knowledge of each of them together shall help with avoiding these problems again.

A community member asked how big these trees would grow in regards to the caliber and size of the trunks.

Mr. Vasser stated that three and a half to four inches (3.5-4 in.) around with branches starting at six feet (6 ft.) high and above. He explained with a bigger tree the branches will start higher above. He stated the trunk will be about six feet (6 ft.) around with about nine feet (9 ft.) of branches on average.

A community member asked if trees can be chosen that do not cause white things to blow around.

Mr. Vasser stated he is unsure of what white things are being discussed but there is a type tree that dominates in this area that does have white things that blow in the wind.

A community member stated he believes the woman was discussing cottonwood poplars.

Mr. Vasser stated he has not seen a lot of them along Main Street but maybe they are along the side streets.

Ms. Hogan stated there are streets in the area that are blowing these things onto Main Street.

A community member stated there are white things that nest on storefronts and they look similar to snow.

A community member stated the engineers do not live in Springfield but they are making plans for Springfield. She stated she lives on Wendell Place and she has spoken with Ms. Hogan and she is opposed to Wendell Place being opened up. She stated people that don't live in Springfield should not be allowed to tell Springfield what they need to do. She explained she does not care about the sidewalks and the trees but she is concerned with Wendell Place being opened up and used as a throughway.

Mr. Becchard stated Wendell Place is not the topic of the current community meeting.

Ms. Hogan asked if there were any more questions.

Ms. Kagan asked if there were any more questions. She explained she does have announcements. She stated it appears more research needs to be done and this is the reason for these meetings. The perspective of the community is necessary for the plans to be implemented. She stated there will be another community meeting being held but the date is not set in stone yet. She explained this will probably be in May or June and the next presentation on Main Street will be given and the next phase, the Dwight Street extension, will be worked on. The first part of the meeting will be focused on Main Street and the discussion will begin on the Dwight Street extension.

Ms. Kagan stated for those interested in the landscaping of this project graduate students from UMASS, who have done a seven (7) week project, will be presenting their ideas for the South End Revitalization Project on March 26th at 6 pm at the TD Banknorth Conference Center.

Ms. Hogan explained this was an exercise for the students. They will not be making any decisions on the landscaping.

Ms. Kagan stated this is an educational and academic project.

A community member asked the notice of this meeting be emailed to all.

Ms. Kagan stated that she will do so.

A community member asked when the physical aspect of the plans for the South End will ensue.

Ms. Kagan stated they are anticipated to begin late summer or early fall of 2009.

Ms. Hogan stated they are trying to begin early summer.

A community member asked if the bid has been released yet.

Ms. Hogan stated it has not.

Ms. Kagan stated the plan must be finalized before this could occur.

Mr. Becchard stated they would love to break ground in the first week of June but there are things that must be done first. He explained the summer is the best answer he can give at the moment.

A community member stated a couple of weeks would not make a difference when they have been waiting thirty-five (35) years. They want the project done correctly.

Ms. Kagan stated they are seizing the window of opportunity. She explained they have the money and the commitment from the City, so they must move forward. She encourages all with businesses in the South End and on Main Street to make sure the front of your business' appearance is kept up. She is excited and hopes all will do their part to keep the South End looking beautiful.

Ms. Kagan thanked all for coming and she thanked the gentleman that brought the pizza and beverages.